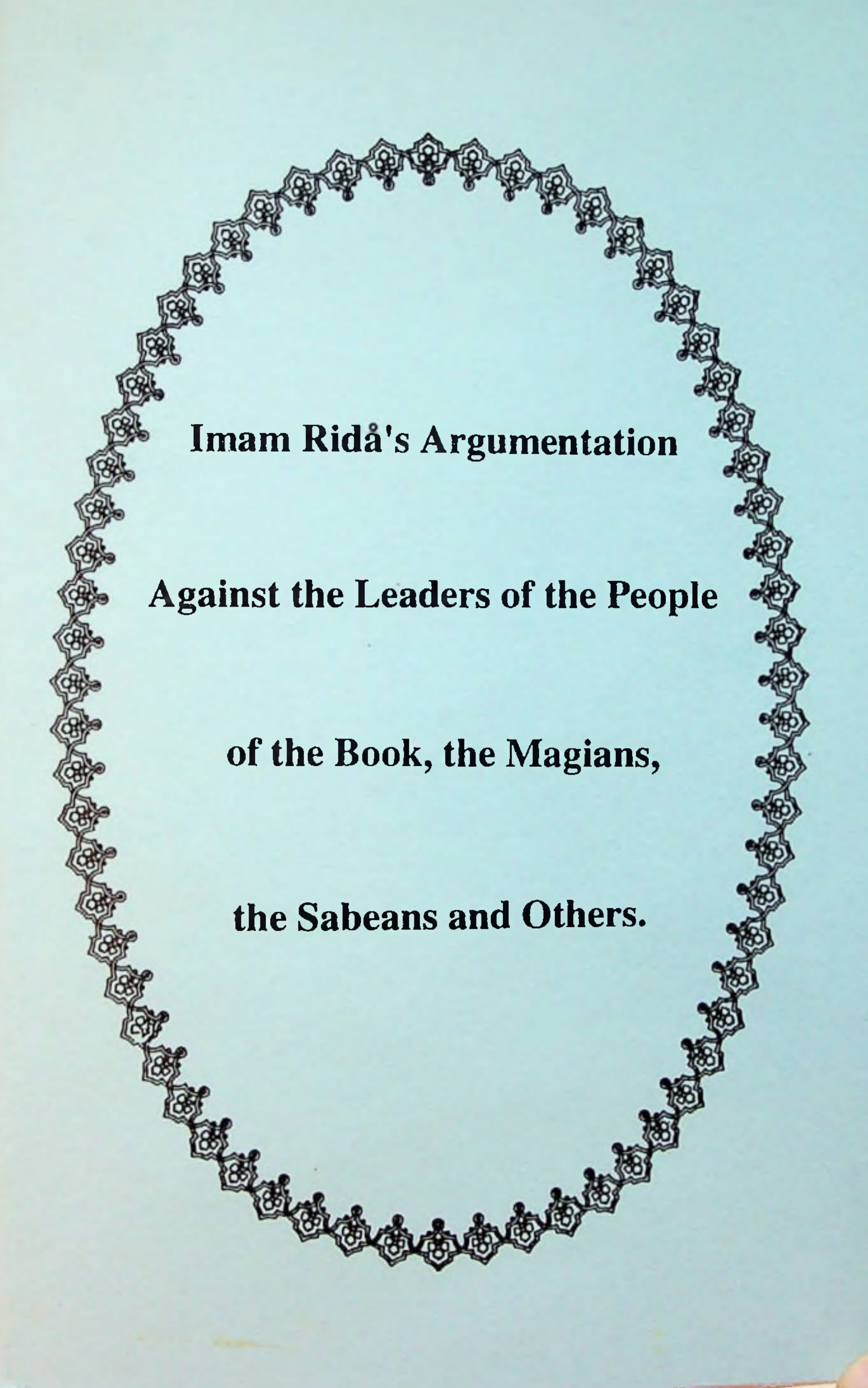
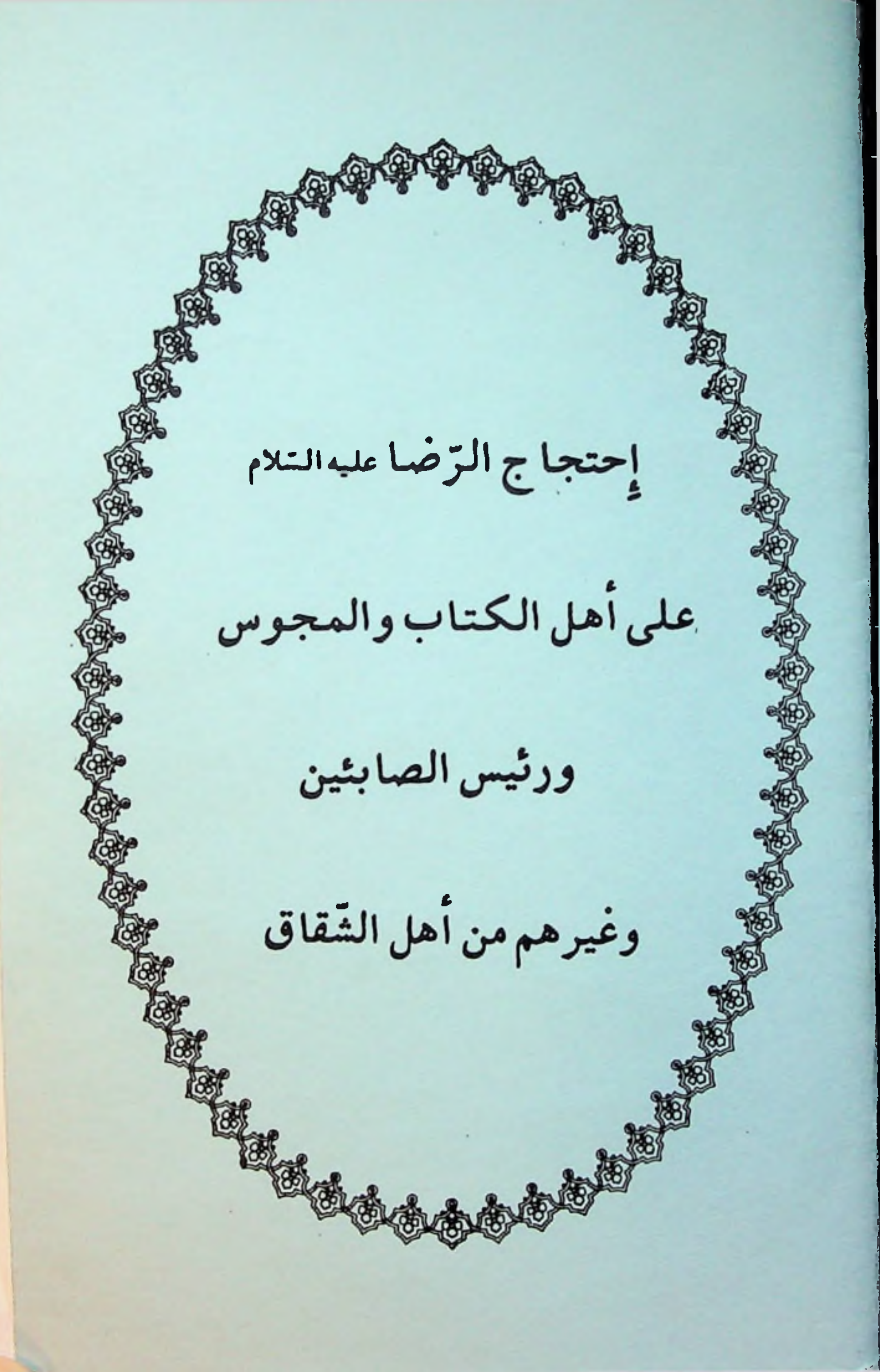


Imam Ridȧ's Argumentation

Against the Leaders of the People

of the Book, the Magians,

the Sabeans and Others.

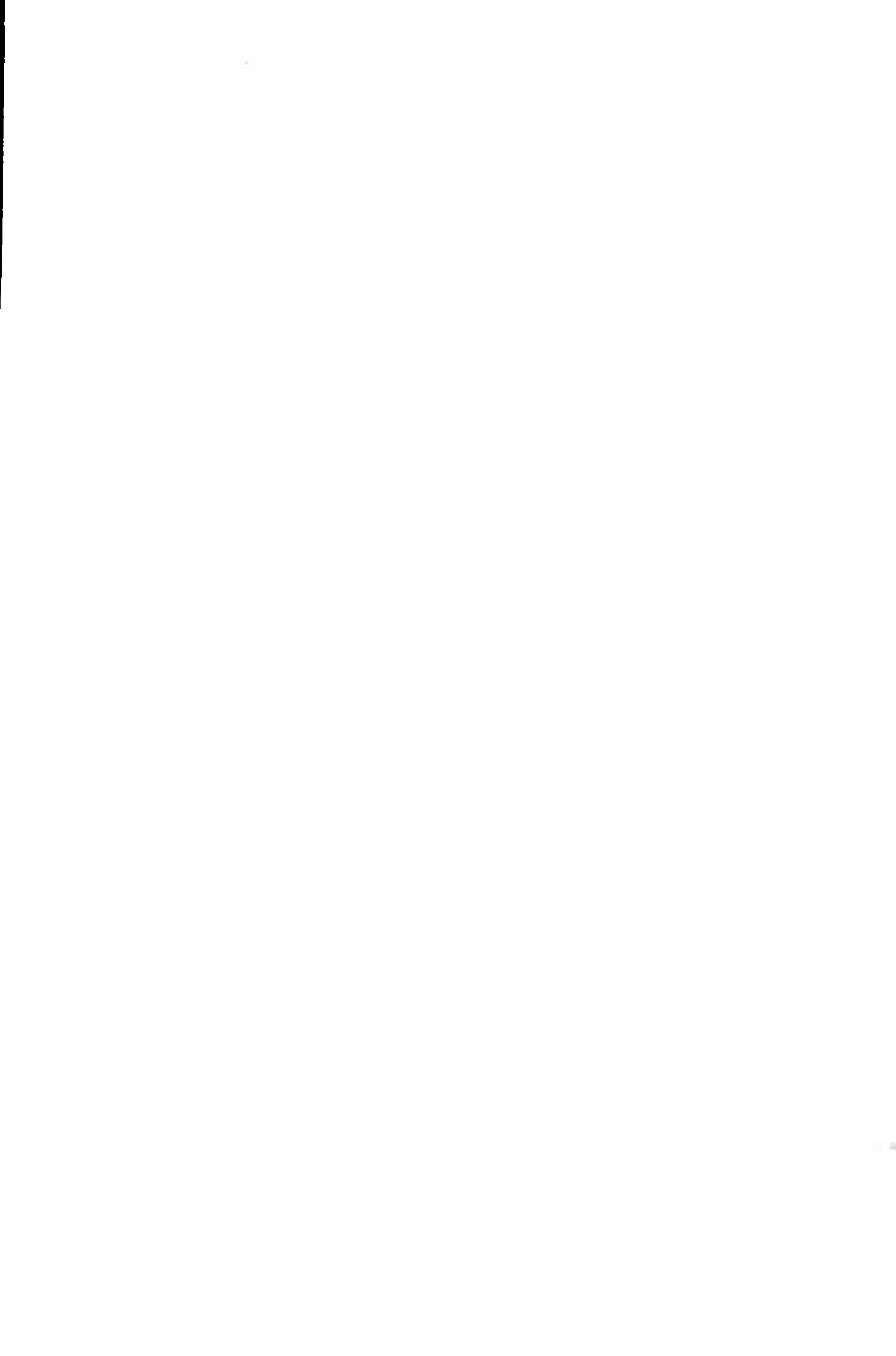


إحتجاج الرّضا عليه السّلام

على أهل الكتاب والمجوس

ورئيس الصابئين

وغيرهم من أهل الشّقاق



Imam Ridå's Argumentation Against the Leaders of the People of the Book, the Magians, the Sabeans and Others.

Translator's Preface

It is generally agreed that word by word literal translation from one language to another can often defeat the very purpose of translation. Idioms and expressions in one language may mean something totally different in another. In the case of Arabic, this difficulty is all the more pronounced, especially when the source text is from medieval classical Arabic, and the language to which one is attempting a translation is modern English.

I have therefore chosen to follow the example of my peers in this field, and render as close a version as possible of the original text in its new language, maintaining as closely as possible, that which will give the reader a sense of the original structure and expression.

Some expressions that will occur in my translation may be therefore perceived as arcane--but I have deliberately used them to give the reader a sense of the classical medieval Arabic used by the Imam al-Rida (ص).

Translating the words and rich language of the Imam is indeed a daunting task--but I approach the undertaking with great pleasure. This is because I know that my efforts will, God Willing, let those who are unable to understand the original Arabic, have some idea of the genius that was the eighth imam of the Muslims. The inimitable Abu'l Ḥassan 'Alī b. Mūsa al-Riḍā (ص).

Khaleel Mohammed

Imam-Riðå's Argumentation Against the Leaders of the People of the Book, the Magians, the Sabeans[1] and others.

It has been reported that al-£asan b. Mu³ammad al-Nawfalî said: "When Alî Ibn Musa al-Riðå (ص) came to al-Ma'mýn, al-Faðl b. Sahl ordered that the scholars (writers of treatises) should assemble before him so that he might listen to a debate between them and Imam-Riðå. Among them were the Catholicos[2], the Exilarch[3], the Magian High Priest[4], the Zoroastrians, and the Patriarch of the Byzantine Church, and the scholastics. Al-Faðl then informed al-Ma'mýn of their gathering, and the latter granted them audience, and after welcoming them said:

'I have brought you here together for something that is good. I would like you to debate with my cousin, the Medinite, who has come to me. On the morrow, you should all assemble here, and let none of you absent himself.'

They replied, "To hear is to obey, O Chief of the Believers! We will, God willing, be here in the morning."

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[1]Translator's note: I have retained the Arabic "Sabeans" since there is difficulty in identifying the group referred to in 2:63. So far the strongest argument seems to be that they were a Judeo-Christian group with Gnostic tendencies (*EI*, Supp.,VIII:675-678). Yusuf Ali states that the group with whom al-Riðå had his debate was probably the one from Harra that claimed to be Sabeans, probably because the Qur'an gave them a special status. (Yusuf Ali, Translation of the Qur'an, 1992:33)

[2]Primate of the Armenian Church.

[3]رأس الجالوت is the Arabicised form of the Aramaic *Resh Galuta*--leader of the Jewish Community in Exile, known in English as the Exilarch (EJ,6:1023).

[4]Literally "the servant of the fire"--a title given to the chief minister of the Magians.

Al-£assan b. Mu³ammad al-Nawfalî continued: "We were in discourse with Abu'l £assan al-Riðâ when his aide Yâsir entered and said: 'My lord! The Chief of the Believers sends you his greetings and says:

> May I be as a ransom for you O my brother! The scholars, the men of religion, the scholastics from Allah the various faiths have come before us. If you wish to debate with them, then you should be with us tomorrow. If you do not like it, then do not to burden yourself, but if you wish, we will come to you!

Abu'l £assan replied: "Give my salaams to him and tell him that In sha Allah comply with his wish and come to him in the morning, if God so wills!"

Al-Nawfalî continued: "When Yâsir left, Imam Al Ridâ turned to us and addressed me saying: "O Nawfali! You are an Iraqi and the Iraqis are not tendentious. Why do you think my cousin has chosen to assemble us with the polytheists and the scholastics?"

I said to him: "May I be as a ransom for you! He wants to test you, to assess your prowess. He has however planned an ill-conceived strategy. And the strategy that he has concocted is , by God, a heinous one indeed!"

Imam Al-Riðâ asked:' And what is planned in their strategy?'

I said: "The theologians and purveyors of innovation are anything but 'ulamâ! This is because they do not prohibit what is evil. The scholars, scholastics and the polytheists are people of evil and sophistry. If you state to them that Allâh is one, they say:' His unicity is true.' And if you say: 'Mu³ammad (ص) is a messenger,' they say: 'His messengership has been established.' After this, they will bewilder their opponent with their sophistry, so that his argument seems null and void. They will dispute with and pressure him until he relinquishes his stance. So beware of them! May I be a ransom for you!"

Imam Al-Riðå smiled and said to me: "O Nawfalî! do you fear that they will refute my argumentation?"

I responded: "No! by Allah, I have never ever harboured any fear about that. Indeed I wish

that Allåh will cause you to triumph over them!"

He said: "O Nawfalî, would you like to know when al-Ma'mýn will regret what he has done?"

When I replied in the affirmative, he said: "This will occur when he hears my argument against the people of the Torah with me using their own book, against the people of the New Testament with their own book, against the people of their Psalms by using their own Psalms, against the Sabeans from their own Hebrew writings, against the Magians from their own Persian writings, and against the Byzantine with their own writings, and against the scholars in their own jargon. After I have debunked each group, and totallyy refuted its arguments, with each recanting his own position and admitting the truth of mine, Ma'mýn will then know that he is not deserving of his position, and will then feel remorse. Truly there is no power or strength except with Allah, the Supreme, the All-Powerful."

The next morning, al-Fadl b. Sahl came to us and said to Imam Al-Riðå :"May I be as a ransom for you. Your cousin awaits you. The group has convened, so do you still want to meet them?"

Imam Al-Ridå responded: "You leave me no choice! I shall come, Insha Allah!"

He then made ablutions as for prayer, and shared some Sawiq with us, and then we went forth together. Al-Ma'mun's court was absolutely crowded when we got there. Mu³ammad b. Ja'far was among the clan of Abu Talib, and the Hashimites and generals were also present.

Upon Imam al-Ridå 's entrance, al-Ma'mun rose to his feet, as did Mu³ammad b. Ja'far and the entire Hashimite delegation. They remained standing while Imam al-Ridå was sitting with al-Ma'mun, until he ordered them to take their seats. They did so, and Imam al-Riðå remained in

private conversation with al-Ma'mun for quite a while. The latter finally turned to the Catholicos and said: "O Catholicos! This is my cousin, 'Alî b. Mÿsa b Ja'far and he is a a descendant of 'Alî b. Abî ¢ãlib and Fa²ima, daughter of our Prophet. I wish that you would debate with him."

The Catholicos answered: "O Chief of the Believers! How can I debate with a man who counters with a book which I reject, and a prophet in whom I do not believe?"

Imam al-Riðå addressed him saying, "O Christian! Were I to dispute you using your scripture, will you decide on the strength of that?"

The Catholicos rejoined: "Can I reject what the Bible says? Yes, by God, I will judge by it, whether I like it or not!"

Imam Al-Riðå then said to him: "Pose whatever question you wish, and Insha Allah answer it."

The Catholicos asked: "What is your view about the prophethood of Jesus and of his book; do you reject either of the two?"

Imam Al-Riðå replied: "I firmly believe in the prophethood of Jesus and the book he brought, and that which he told his community, and that which his disciples believed. And I reject any Jesus that did not believe in the prophecy of Mu²ammad and who did not give his community these tidings!

The Catholicos said: "Is it not the rule that judgments are only passed based on the evidence of two acceptable witnesses?"

Imam Al-Riðå agreed, and the Catholicos added: "Then produce two witnesses from outside of your own faith who will attest to the prophethood of Mu³ammad. These witnesses must be from those whom the Christians regard as acceptable. You may also make the same request of us

pertaining to our faith."

Imam Al-Riðā retorted: "You have to this point only produced half a proposition! Will you not accept our offer that the witness be one of impeccable honesty and from among the closest confidantes of Jesus, son of Mary?"

The Catholicos asked: "And who is this witness? Name him for me!"

Imam Al -Riðā said: "What do you think about John?

The Catholicos said: "You have mentioned a man from those whom Jesus loved most."

Imam Al-Riðā said:"I command on oath: Is it not written in the New Testament that John said: '*Christ told me of the religion of Mu'ammad the Arab, and informed me that he will come after him? I informed the disciples and they believed in him*[5]'"

The Catholicos admitted: "Indeed John reported that from Christ. He spoke of the prophethood of a man, of his family, and the inheritance of that prophet's family. He did not however specify when that time would be, nor did he specify what tribe he would come from so that we might know him."

Imam Al-Riðā responded: "Were I to produce someone who reads the Gospels, and were he to recite to you the mention of Mu'ammad, and the family of Mu'ammad, of his people and community, would you believe that man?"

The Catholicos agreed: "It would be a compelling proposition."

Imam Al-Riðā then said to the Byzantine Patriarch, "How much of a command do you have of the third book of the Bible?"

The Patriarch replied: "I was not trained in it."

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[5]The reference here is apparently to John 14-16.

Imam Al-Riðå then turned to the Exilarch and said: "Do you read the Bible?"

The Exilarch replied: "By my life! Most certainly!"

Imam Al-Riðå said: "Then let us read the the third book. If there is any mention of Mu'ammad, his family and his community, then bear witness to it. If however, there is none, then do not yeild to me."

He thereupon read the third book until he came to the mention of Mu'ammad, then stopped and said: "O Christian! I ask you by the right of Jesus and his mother, do you know that I am versed in the Bible?"

The latter replied in the affirmative. Imam Al-Riðå then read the details about Mu'ammad, his family, and his community and said:"What do you say O Christian? These are the words of Jesus, son of Mary. Were you to reject this , your death would be mandatory for then you would have repudiated your lord, your prophet and your scripture."

The Catholicos said: "I do not repudiate it. It has become manifest to me from the Gospel and I certainly accept it."

Imam Al-Riðå announced: "Let Allah here bear witness to his avowal!" He continued: "O Catholicos! Pose whatever question you wish!"

The Catholicos said: "Tell me about the disciples of Jesus, son of Mary. How many were there? And how many scholars of the gospels were there?"

Imam Al-Riðå replied: "You have chanced upon the one who will give you this information. The disciples were twelve in number, and the best and most beloved of them was Luke. As to the scholars of the Gospel, there were three: John the Elder, John the Circassian, and John of Ephesus. It was this last one that mentioned about the Prophet and his family. It was about this prophet that

Jesus informed his community, and the children of Israel. He went on: "O Christian! By Allah! We believe in Jesus who believed in Muʾammad. We do not hold anything against Jesus, except his weakness, his insufficiency of fasting and prayer."

The Catholicos said: "By Allah! You have just corrupted your scholarship! You have weakened your position! I did not think anything other than that you were the most learned person of the Muslims!"

Imam Al-Riðã asked: "And how is that?"

The Catholicos said: "By your statement that Jesus was weak, rarely fasted and prayed. Jesus did not go for a single day without fasting, nor spent a night without praying. He always fasted and spent his nights in prayer."

Imam Al-Riðã countered: "For whom was he fasting, and to whom was he praying? "

The Catholicos was dumbfounded and could not continue. Al-Riðã went on: "O Christian! I want to ask you about a matter."

The Catholicos consented to being asked and so Imam Al-Riðã said:"I did not deny that he recalled to life the dead by Allah's permission."

The Catholicos answered: "You have already done that. Certainly someone who brings back the dead to life, or cures the leprous or the blind is Lord, deserving of worship."

Imam Al-Riðã answered: "Elisha did the likes of what Jesus did, walking upon the water, bringing back the dead to life, curing the leprous and the mute. Why then did his community not take him as a god, nor did anyone worship him instead of God, the Glorious and Exalted? Ezekiel did the same things like Jesus, son of Mary, restoring 35000 people to life 60 years after they died."

Turning to the Exilarch, Imam al-Riðã said: "O Exilarch! Do you recollect this about the

tribes of Israel in the Torah? Nebuchaddnezar chose them from among the prisoners of war taken when he besieged the Temple and took them to Babylon. Allah thereupon sent Elisha to them and he restored them to life. This is in the Torah, and none but an apostate from your community can reject it."

The Exilarch responded:"We have heard of the matter, and we know it. "

Imam Al-Riðā said: You have spoken the truth! Let us now refer to the Torah."

He then read some verses from the document and then the Jew came forward, swaying back and forth in concert with the recitation and marvelling. Imam Al-Riðā then said to the Christian: "O Christian! Were these before Jesus, or was Jesus before them?

He replied: "They were obviously before him. Imam Al-Riðā said: "The Quraish got together and went to the Messenger of Allah, asking him to bring their dead back to life. He sent 'Alî b. Abî ¢ālib with them saying to him: "Go to the graveyard. At the top of your voice, call out the names of the dead about whom the people ask saying: "O so and so! O so and so! O so and so! The messenger of All, by the permission of God, directs you to come forth."

'Alî did as he was told and the dead arose from the grave, still shaking the dust from their heads. The Quraish then questioned them about their affairs and then told them that a prophet had come to them. The revivified dead then said: "Would that we could have lived until his coming so that we might believe in him!"

Mu³ammad cured the mute, the leprous and the possessed. The animals, birds, the jinns and the devils all spoke to him. Yet we have not taken him as a god besides Allah. And we have not denied any of the preceding prophets their honour and merit. If however, you have taken Jesus as a God, you should take Elisha and Ezekiel as gods too! For they did the same things like Jesus, such

as restoring the dead to life etc."

"There was also the case of one of the tribes of Isreal which had left its land, fleeing from the pestilence. But Allah caused them to die in a single stroke, the people of the town then built a fence around them, and they remained there until their bones decayed, and became dust."

One of the prophets of Israel passed by them and was amazed by them as by the vast number of bones and decay. God revealed their matter to him and asked him if he would like that they dead could be brought back to life so that he might exhort them? The prophet answered in the affirmative. God then revealed to him to call to them, and he said: O decayed bones, come forth by Allah's mercy." Then entire group cmae to life, shaking the dust from themselves.

Abraham also took a bird and cut it into pieces. He then placed each piece on a different hill and then called them. They came towards him. There was also the case of Moses, son of Amram, and the seventy elders of Israel whom he took to the mountain, when they had said: "YOU saw your lord, so let us see him!"

He said to them: I saw Him not. They responded: "We will never believe you until we see hijm clearly. They were then struck by lightening, and incinerated to a man, leaving Moses standing all by himself..

Moses then said, 'O my Lord! I chose to take seventy of the elders of Israel and I came with them and now I shall return alone. How then will the people believe in the things I tell them? If you wish,you could have destroyed them before, but will you bring us to ruin because of the actions of the foolish ones amongst us?'

Allah then brought them back to life after their destruction. You cannot reject a single word of what I have said, because the Torah, the New Testament, the Psalms, and the Wisdom literature

all vouchsafe my words. Now if one were to take as a god besides Allah everyone who brought the dead back to life, and healed the mute and the leprous and the possessed, then those that I have mentioned must be taken as gods also. What do you think O Christian?"

The Catholicos said: "It is as you contend. And there is indeed none worthy of worship but Allah!"

Al-Riðå turned his attention to the Exilarch and said: "O Jew! Let me ask you about just a tenth of what God revealed unto Moses, son of Amram. Do you find anything written in the Torah about Mu³ammad and his community, and that the last religious community will follow the rider of a camel, and that this new community will praise the Lord effusively with a new formula that will ring forth from the houses of worship? You will also find that the children of Israel will come to this new community and their king to approve them, for their swords will be unsheated, ready to put to destruction the hordes of disbelievers in every corner of the globe? Tell me, do you find these words in the Torah?"

The Exilarch affirmed that they were indeed written in the Scripture. Al-Riðå then asked the Catholicos what he knew of the book of Isaiah, and the man answered that he knew the book letter by letter.

Al-Riðå then addressed both the Exilarch and the Catholicos saying."Do you recollect that it is written thus in Isaiah: *O my people! I have seen the vision of the rider of an ass, wearing garments of light, and I saw the rider of a camel, his radiance like that of the moon?"*

They confirmed that it was so, and then Al-Riðå said, "O Christian! Do you know of Jesus' words in the New Testament: *I am going to my Lord and your Lord. And the Paraclete shall come. He will vouchsafe me as I have vouchsafed him. He is the one who will explain everything to you.*

He will confute the world, showing where wrong and right judgment lie, he will convict them of wrong, and it is he who will destroy evil. . . (John 16.7)

The Catholicos said: "You have not mentioned a single word from the Bible except that we affirm it."

Al-Riđā probed further, "Then what I have said is clearly stated in the Bible?"

The Catholicos confirmed it, and al-Riđā said ,"Will you then tell me of the First Evangel, how you lost it, and with whom you found it? And who redacted the present one for you?"

The Catholicos replied: "We did not lose the Gospels except for a single day, and we found it the next morning; John and Matthew brought it to us."

Al-Riđā said: "How little you know of the history of the Bible and its (original) scholars! If matters were as you have declared, why then have you differed concerning your scriptures? In fact, were these books that you now have based on the pristine Evangel, you would not have disagreed between yourselves about it. However, I will tell you the truth about the matter! Know that when the original Evangel was lost, the Christians got together before their learned men and said to them: 'Jesus son of Mary was killed, and now we have lost the Gospel. You are the learned men, so what do you propose?' "

"Luke, Mark, John and Matthew said to them: We have memorised the Gospel and we will give it to you scroll by scroll on each Sunday, so fear not concerning it, and do not absent yourself from the churches. Each Sunday, we will give it to you scroll by scroll until we have completed the task."

"Luke, Mark, John and Matthew compiled the present Gospel for you after you had lost the original. And these four were from the students of the students of the first generation. Do you know

this?"

The Catholicos said: "Prior to now, I did not know it, but now I have learnt the truth of the matter. It has been made clear to me through the benefit of your knowledge of the Gospels. I have heard things to which my heart bears witness as true. And I have gained a lot more understanding."

Al-Riðã rejoined, "What do you think about these four redactors of the Gospels?

The Catholicos answered. "They are the scholars of the Gospels, and whatever they testify to is indeed the truth."

al-Riðã said to al Ma'mun and those of his household and others around him: "Bear witness to what he has said!"

They all responded "We so do!"

Al-Riðã then said to the Catholicos,"For the sake of the son and his mother (Mary), do you know that Matthew said about the genealogy of Jesus that Christ was the son of David, son of Abraham, son of Isaac, son of Jacob, son of Judah, son of Phares." (Matthew1:2,3).

"And that Mark[6] said that Jesus was the Logos, materialised in the body of a human, in the form of a man? And that he also said that Jesus, son of Mary and his mother were two humans, made of flesh and blood, and that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Now you say that Jesus said the truth concerning himself in his statement: "*None can go ascend to the heaven except one who came down from there except the rider of the camel, the last of the prophets. For he shall ascend to the heavens and descend* (John 3.13). What do you think about this statement?"

[6]Jesus as the Logos is only mentioned in 1 John 1-16. The mistake here is to be attributed to the narrator of the story since, were al-Rida to make that error, the Catholicos would have corrected him.

The Catholicos said: "These are the words of Jesus and we cannot deny them."

Al-Riðā asked: "What do you then say about what Luke, Mark and Matthew attributed to Jesus?"

The Catholicos replied: "They have lied about him."

Al-Riðā proclaimed: "O people, did this man not vouchsafe them and say that they are the learned men in the Gospels and that their words are words of truth?"

The Catholicos said: "O scholar of the Muslims! I wish that you would excuse me of any responsibility for them!"

Al-Riðā answered: "We have done so. Ask, O Christian, on whatever subject that takes your fancy."

The Catholicos told him: "Let someone else ask you. By God! I did not think that there was someone of your calibre amongst the Muslims!"

Al-Riðā turned to the Exilarch and said: "Do you wish to ask, or shall I ask you?"

The Exilarch replied: "I shall ask. I shall accept no argument from you unless it is based on the Torah, the Gospels, or from the Psalms of David, or from the Books of Abraham and Moses." Al Riðā said: "Then accept nothing from me unless it is from your Torah, and from the words of Moses ben Amram, or from the Gospels from the words of Jesus, son of Mary, or from the Psalms, from the words of David."

The Exilarch then asked: "From where can you prove the prophethood of Muʾammad?"

Al-Riðā said:" Moses testified to it, as did Jesus and David, Allah's viceregent on earth."

The Exilarch said: "Then let us have the words of Moses ben Amram!"

Al-Riðā answered: "Do you know O Jew, that Moses instructed the Children of Israel saying

to them: *There will come to you a prophet from your brethren. So Believe in him and listen to him.*(Deut. 18.18). If you are indeed cognizant of the kinship between Israel and Ishmael, and of the relationship between the two from Abraham, do you know of any brethren of the tribes of Israel other than the Ishmaelites?

The Exilarch complied, "This is what was said. We cannot deny that."

al-Riðå continued: "Did any from the brethren of Israel other than Muʾammad come to you?

When the Exilarch said that none had come, al-Riðå asked ," Is this not true according to you?"

He responded: "Yes, but I would like you to authenticate it from the Torah!"

Al-Riðå said to him: "Do you deny that in the Torah it is written: *The light has come from Mt. Sinai, and glory has shone upon the people from Paran*![7]"

The Exilarch said: "We read the words, but we do not know their meaning."

The Exilarch said: "I will explain to you what they mean. *The Light has come from Mt. Sinai*, that tells us of the revelation which the Glorious and Sublime Holy One sent unto Moses. *And rose up from Seir unto them* tells us about the mountain where Jesus was when Allah sent revelation unto him. *He shined forth from mount Paran* tells us of a mountain from among those in the Meccan area, roughly the distance of a day or two from the city."

"Isaiah stated--according to what you and your associates claim the Torah says--*I saw two riders, thw earth was illuminated for them, one upon an ass, the other on a camel.* Who was on the ass, and who upon the camel?"

The Exilarch said: "I do not know. Tell me about them."

[7]Deut. 33.2

Al-Riðå answered: "The rider of the ass was Jesus, and that of the camel was Mu³ammad. Do you deny this from the Torah?"

The Exilarch said: "No, I do not deny it."

Al-Riðå asked: "Are you familiar with Habakkuk?"

When the Exilarch answered in the affirmative, al-Riðå said: "Your book states: *God came forth with a group from Mt. Paran, And the heavens were filled with his praises for Ahmad and his community. And his horse rode upon the water as if it were land. he has come with a new book after the destruction of the Temple."* Book here means Qur'an. Do you know this and believe in it?

The Exilarch assented: "Indeed Habakkuk said these words, and we do not deny them."

Al-Riðå observed: "David said in the Psalms--and you most certainly read it--*Lord! Send unto us someone who is righteous after the statutes of the nature.* Do you know someone who is righteous in this manner except Mu³ammad?

The Exilarch said:"These certainly are the words of David. We recognise them and we stand by them. But he meant by them Jesus, and the 'nature' means the period prior to Jesus' advent.

Al- Riðå responded: "You are unaware that Jesus did not change the statutes. He only observed the law of the Torah until God took him up unto himself. It is written in the Bible: *The son of man shall goeth and the Paraclete will come after me. . He will ease the travail and shall explain everything to you, and he will vouchsafe me as I have vouchsafed him. I have come to you with parables, and he shall come to you with their explanations.* Do you believe that this is in the Gospels?

He said: Yes, I do not deny it.

Al-Riðå said: I would like to ask you about your prophet, Moses ben Amram. What is the

proof of his prophethood?

The Jew said: He came with that which not a single prophet before him came.

Al-Riðā said: Such as what?

The Exilarch responded: Such as the parting of the sea, the changing of his staff into a living snake, his striking the stone with his staff and causing 12 springs to gush forth, his hand came forth white for all the beholders to see, and he brought several signs which the other humans were not able to duplicate.

Al Riðā said: You are right in saying that they were a proof of his prophethood, and that he came with what no previous prophet had brought. Is it not then that anyone who claims that he is a prophet, and comes with that which the rest of humans are not able to duplicate, must necessarily be accepted by you?

The Exilarch responded: "No... Moses had no equal in terms of his standing and nearness to the Lord. It is not obligatory upon us that we attest to the prophethood of anyone who claims prophecy unless his miracles are similar to those of Moses."

Al-Riðā rebutted: "So how do you authenticate the prophethood of those who came *before* Moses? They did not part the waters of the sea, nor did they cause springs to gush forth from a rock, and they did not make their hands emerge white from their breasts as Moses did, nor did their staffs turn into living snakes!"

The Jew countered: "I have already informed you that when they came with their miracles which other human being s were not able to perform, or if they came with that which Moses did not do, belief in them is still mandatory."

Al-Riðā said to him: "O Exilarch! What then prevented you from believing in Jesus, son of

Mary when he used to bring the dead back to life, heal the leprous and the mute, and fashion birds from clay and then by All's will, endow them with life?"

The Exilarch answered. "It is said that he did those things. We were not witness to them."

Al-Riðå said: "Were you witness to the things that Moses did so that you can testify to them actually having occured? Is it not rather that the information about Moses performing those miracles has come to you from the respected and trustworthy companions of his?"

The Exilarch answered in the affirmative, and al-Riðå continued:"So too then did the news of what Jesus did reach you. Why then did you believe in Moses and not in Jesus?"

The Exilarch could not offer a response.

Al-Riðå said: "And so too is the case of Mu'ammad and his message, and that of every prophet sent by God. From among Mu'ammad's signs was that was a poor orphan, a hired shepherd, not himself learned or having studied with any scholar. But then, he came with the Qur'an in which there are detailed stories of the prophets, about things that have past and things that are yet to happen until the day of Judgment. He used to inform them of their secrets and what they did in their houses, by miracles too numerous to mention."

The Exilarch said: "We do not rate the stories of Jesus or Mu'ammad as authentic. It is not allowable for us to affirm anything whcih we cannot accept as true."

Al-Riðå probed: "So then , it was a false witness who testified to the prophethood of Jesus and Mu'ammad?

When the Exilarch could not respond, al-Riðå turned his attention to the Zoroastrian High Priest and said and said: Tell me about Zarathustra whom you claim to be a prophet What is your proof that he was indeed so?

The Priest responded: "He came to us with something which none before him had brought. We did not actually see him, but the stories from our elders have reached us that he legislated and made allowable that which none before had done, and we follow him.

Al-Riðå asked: "So then, the information came to you and you accepted it?"

The man affirmed this and al-Riðå continued: "So it was too with the previous religions. Information came to the people about what the prophets had brought, and among these prophets were Moses and Jesus. If, on the basis of transmitted information, you could accept that Zarathustra did what none previous to him had done, what then is your reason for not accepting Moses and Jesus?"

The High Priest was left dumbfounded.

Al-Riðå then said: "O People! If there be anyone among you who opposes Islam, and wishes to ask any question in that regard, then let him do so without any fear."

Upon this, 'Umar b. al-¬åbî, one of the Sabean theologians stood up and said: "O most learned of the people! Had you not invited questioning, I would not have posed this one to you. I have journeyed to Kufa, Basra, Syria and Arabia, and I have not met a single theologian who can prove to me that there is one God besides whom there is no other. Will you permit me to ask you about this matter?

Al-Riðå said: "If 'Umar b. al-¬åbî were in this gathering, it would have to be you!"

The man replied: "Indeed, I am he!"

Al-Riðå said: "Ask away O 'Umar! But be direct! Do not be discursive nor evasive!"

Umar rejoined: "My lord! I swear by Allah that I only ask about something which consumes my interest. I shall not go beyond that."

When al-Riðå told him he could ask about whatever pleased him, the assembly crowded

around him, straining forward and pressing in upon each other.

'Umar said: "Tell me about the Prime Cause and what He created.

Al-Riđă replied:"You have asked your question! Now listen to the answer--as for the Prime Cause, He still remains a Single Entity. There is no partner, and He is not bounded by limit, nor by width, and He remains thus. He himself created something from which there was no prototype, and this creation had various measurements--not in any way like Himself. Some creation after that was submissive to Allah while others were not, some in concord, others in disharmony, others were with various colours, tastes and desires. This was not because of any need of Allah that they should be such, and not for any preference to be attained solely by His whim, nor for any personal view in that which he made abundant or lacking. Do you understand this, O 'Imrân[8]?

'Umar eagerly assented and al-Riđă continued: "Know, O 'Imrân, that were He to create what he did because of some need, then He he would not have made that except upon which He could rely to fulfill that need. But then, he would have had to create twice that *ad infinitum*, because every time the number of helpers increase, their master becomes stronger."

The matter was discussed at great length between the two men, with al-Riđă rebutting or refuting or providing proofs to most of 'Umar's questions, until the matter ended with the latter stating: "I testify that the Prime Cause is as you, my lord, have described. There however remains one item. I wish to ask you about the name "The Wise." In what way? Does anything comprehend Him? Or does He change from one thing to another, or does He have need of anything?"

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[8]Here al-Riđă switches to a diminutive form of 'Umar, an action usually only done out of affection and to indicate closeness. It manifests a wonderful trait--for 'Umar was clearly uncomfortable about asking such questions in the Abbaside theocracy. Al-Riđă's use of the diminutive was designed to make him feel at ease and ask questions without any restraint.

Al-Riðå said: "I will tell you O 'Imrån, so understand what you have asked, for it is among the most otiose of that which confronts humankind in their questioning concerning Allah. A narrow-minded, subjective person cannot fathom the answer. Only one endowed with perception and objectiveness will not have problems grasping the matter.

In the first place: were the Creator to create that which He did because of some need, it would have been logical for someone to say: He changed into that which He created because of His need to do so--but then Allah did not create things because of His need of them. He remains unique, independent, whereas creation relies upon each other for support. And all this is under Allah's majesty. He is not within anything, nor does He come out of anything, nor does He get tired of guarding and taking care of all these. None of creation understands how this is except All, the Glorious, the Supreme and those among His prophets and others to whom He has revealed these mysteries, the guardians of Allah's affairs (the angels), and those who understand His sharî'ah. The similitude of Allah is like the blink of an eye or less. If Allah wishes something, He simply says 'Be' and it is. Do you understand, O 'Imrån?"

'Umar answered: "By God I do! I testify that Allah is as you have described and have established His unicity. Mu³ammad is His messenger, sent with guidance and the religion of truth." He then fell in prostration facing the Qibla and accepted Islam."

Al-£asan b. Mu³ammad al-Nawfalî said: "When the scholastics reflected upon the words of 'Umar b. al-¬åbî, and the fact that he had never before been vanquished in debate, none came forth to challenge al-Riðå or ask him about anything. When night fell, al-Ma'mýn and al-Riðå stood up and exited, and the people left the court.

After al-Riðå returned to his residence, he directed his servant to bring 'Umar b. al-¬ābī to him. Al-Nawfalī said: "May I be as a ransom for you. I know where he is: He is with some of our companions from among the Shias."

Al-Riðå said: "No matter. Fetch a riding animal to him."

So I got him and returned with him to al- Riðå who welcomed him, and ordered a new suit of clothes for him, gave it to him, and directed also that 10000 dinars be given to 'Umar .

I said to al-Riðå: "May I be a ransom for you. You have just relived the story of your grandfather, the Chief of the Believers!"

He responded: "This is absolutely necessary." He then called for dinner, and seated my at his right, and placed 'Imran on his left. When we had finished, he said to him: "Go now and come back on the morrow, and we will treat you to so Medinese food."

After this, 'Umar used to gather the scholastics and scholars and refute their arguments until they recanted. Al-Ma'mýn presented him with 10000 dirhams and al-Faðl also rewarded him handsomely. Al-Riðå gave him the ¬adaqa of Balkh and he got whatever he desired."

It is reported that 'Alī b. Al-Jahm said: " I found al-Ma'mun was in his court with al-Riðå; he said to the latter:

'O son of the Messenger of Allah. Is it you who has said that the prophets are all infallible[9]?'

[9]Our belief in the prophet and the Imam is that they are infallible--free from the major and the minor sins, from error and forgetfulness, or anything else that is considered to indicate a shortcoming or which is generally perceived as such.Were they to lose this infallibility, we could impute to them the possibility of error, forgetful-ness,and disobedience in every word and deed. This would mean that neither their speech or actions could be used as proof against us, since we would then not be under any obligation to follow them. This would be dichotomous with the goal of their prophethood. The Imamiya Shias are in consensus on this doctrine of infallibility.

Al-Riðå answered: "Certainly that is so."

Al-Ma'mÿn asked: "Then what is the meaning of *And Adam disobeyed his Lord and strayed?*"(TaHa:24)

Al-Riðå replied: "Allah, the Glorious and Sublime said to Adam: '*You and your mate may live in the garden and eat from whatever you wish. But come not nigh to this tree for then you shall be of the wrongdoers.'* (Baqara:35)

God did not say to them: "Do not eat from this tree or from its species--and they did not go near to this tree, but they ate from another since the Satan deceived them and said to them: 'Your Lord did not forbid you from the tree.' (al-'A'råf:20). Rather, He prohibited you from drawing nigh to another tree, and He did not prohibit you to eat from it, except that you would become angels or immortals (al-'A'råf:20). And he swore to them that he was among those that was giving them advice (al-An'åm:21). Now Adam and Eve had not earlier witnessed anyone taking Allah's name in testimony and still lying. *And so he led them astray."* al-An'åm:22)

The couple then ate from the tree believing Satan since he had taken oath in Allah's name that his statement was true. This was committed by Adam before the prophethood. The action was not one of such a severe nature that it could mean his being put in the Hellfire. It was rather among the little mistakes[10] that prophets are allowed before revelation is sent to them.

Anything contrary to this which is extrapolated from some reports and claims is nothing but conjecture.

[10]The author says here: What al-Rida perhaps meant by the "little mistakes that prophets are allowed" is the leaving aside of that which is meritorious, and doing that which, even though it is allowable, is considered in bad taste. It is of lesser severity than the smallest misdemeanour in respect to that which is more severe. This is based on logical deduction, as well as the transmitted narrations.

But when Allah chose him for his grace and made him a prophet, he was faultless with no major or minor sins. Allah said: *And Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray, the his Lord granted him grace and forgave him and gave him guidance* (TaHa:121). Allah also said: *Allah chose Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imran above all people* (3:33).

Al Ma'mýn said: What then is the meaning of the verse: *When He gave them a righteous offspring, they made a partner for Him in that which He gave them.* (al-'A'råf: 188,189).

Al-Riðå replied: "Eve underwent 500 pregnancies,each time delivering a boy and a girl. Adam and Eve had promised Allah that if He gave them a righteous offspring, they would be thankful (al-'A'råf: 189). When they were given two healthy children, identical twins, free from malady or defect, these children were either male or female.The two children ascribed partners to Allah in that which He gave them, and did not thank Allah in the manner their parents had done. Allah therefore said *Allah is above that which they ascribe to Him.*(6:189)"

Al-Ma'mýn answered: "I bear witness that you are indeed the son of the Prophet. Explain to me the verse about Abraham *And when the night blanketed him, he saw a star and said 'this is my Lord'* ?"(al-An'åm:76).

Al-Riðå said: "Abraham came upon three types of people when he emerged from the area in which he was hidden: One group worshipping Venus, another worshipping the Moon, and another the Sun.

And when the darkness of the night covered him, he saw Venus and said: 'This is my Lord?' His questionwas one of rejection and inquiry. *And when the star set he said: I do not like those that set.'* (Al-An'åm::76). This is because setting is an attribute of the accident and not of the Prime

Cause.

When he saw the moon shining, he said: This is my Lord?--again in rejection and inquiry. When it set, he said: *If my Lord guide me not, I would surely be from among the misguided folk.* (al-An'âm: 77) This means: *Had my Lord not guided me, I would certainly have been among the misguided folk.*

When he saw the sun shining, he said: *This is my Lord? It is greater than Venus and the Moon.* This statement too was made in rejection and inquiry.He did not utter his words in the form of a statement or confession. When the three celestial bodies had set, he said to the three groups: *O People! I am free from what you associate with All. For me, I have set my face truly and firmly towards Him who created the heavens and the earth. And never will I attribute partners to All.*(al-An'âm::79)

What Abraham intended by his words then was to prove to the people the falseness of their religion and show them that worship is not due to such as Venus, the Moon and the Sun. Rather, worship is due to the Creator of those bodies, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

The proof that he used agaisnt his people was from among the things that Allah gave him and inspired him to say--according to Allah's words: *That was our proof which we gave to Abraham to use against his people.*"(Al-Anam:83)

Al-Ma'mun said: "All has endowed you with knowledge, O son of the Prophet! Tell me the meaning of Abraham's words: *Lord! Show me how you give life to the dead. Allah said: Do you not have faith? Abraham said: Certainly, But just to set my heart at ease.*"(Al Baqara:260)

al-Riđâ replied: "All had revealed to Abraham: 'I have taken from my worshippers a friend, If he were to ask me to give life to the dead, I would do it for him.' Abraham felt that he was that

special friend and said: *'O my Lord! Show me how you give life to the dead.'Allah said: Do you not have faith?*

Abraham said: Certainly. But it is in order to put my heart at ease. i.e. regarding the matter of the friendship."

Allah said: .""*Take four birds and tame them to turn towards you.Put a portion of them on every hill and call on them. They will come to thee flying. Then know that Allah is exalted in Power, Wise."*

Abraham took an eagle, a duck, a peacock, a rooster and cut them into pieces, mixed those pieces, and then put a portion of each on the ten hills that surrounded him. He put their beaks between his fingers, and then called them by their names, having placed grain and water beside him.

The pieces flew towards each other until they constituted bodies, each one coming to him at his head and his knees. Abraham then let go of their beaks, whereupon they then flew and alighted , drinking from the water and pecking at the grain.

They said: "O prophet of God! You have brought us back to life. May Allah give you (prosperous) life!

Abraham responded: "Rather, it is Allah who causes to die and who gives life and He has power over all things."

Al-Ma'mun said: "May Allah bless you O Abu'l Hassan! Tell me about:

Moses struck him and killed him and said: This is from the action of Satan (Al Qasas:15).

Al-Riðå answered: "Moses had entered one of Pharoah's towns at a time when its people were lax in their guard. This was between Sunset and Night. Moses found two men fighting, one from

his tribe and the other from this enemy. Moses' tribesman sought succour agaisnt his opponent, and Moses struck their opponent with his fist and--by Allahl's leave-- killed him. Moses then said: "This is an act of Satan"--referring to the dispute that had occured between the two men and not to the act of his killing the opponent. *Indeed he--Satan--is a clear and evil enemy* (ibid.)

Al-Ma'mun said: "And what is the meaning of Moses' words: *Lord! I have wronged myself so forgive me* (al-Qasas:16)?"

Al-Riðā said: "He meant: 'By entering this town, I put myself in a position where I should not have been. *So forgive me.* i.e. Protect me from the enemy so that they might not overcome and kill me. *And Allah forgave him.* i.e. Allah sheltered him from his enemy. *He is the forgiving the merciful.*

He said: *Lord thou hast bestowed thy grace upon me* (al-Qasas:17): i.e. with strength so much so that I killed a man with a single blow.

And I will never be a help to those who sin. (ibid) i.e. Rather I will dedicate myself to your cause with my strength until you are well pleased.

So he found himself in the morning in the city, in a state of fear, when lo! the man who had sought his help the day before, sought his help again. Moses said to him: "You are a quarrelsome fellow."(al Qasas: 18). You fought with someone yesterday. If you fight again today, I shall discipline you. *And when he decided to lay hold of the man who was an enemy to both of them* (al-Qasas:19), the one whom he was aiding thought that Moses was going to strike him instead and said: *O Moses! Is it your intention to slay me as you slew a man yesterday? Your intention is only to become a powerful and arrogant person in the land, and not to be one who sets things right.*(al-Qasas:19)

Al-Ma'mun said: "May Allah reward you bounteously! O Abu'l Hassan, what about the

explanation of Moses' saying to Pharoah: *I did it, and I am from the misguided ones?* " (Al-Shuara:20)

Al-Riðå said: " Pharoah said to Moses when the latter came to him: *You did that which you have done, and you are from among the thankless ones* (al-Shu'arå : 19). Moses responded: *I did it then and I am from those who are astray* (al-Shu'arå:20). i.e. I did it then, and I am from those who are astray–meaning: having strayed from my road and coming upon your town. I fled from you because I feared you, but Allah gave revelation unto me and made me one of His messengers."

Allah said to Mu'ammad: *Did we not find you an orphan and give you shelter*?(al-Duha:5) This means that we found you alone, and caused the people to come to you. *We found you astray* i.e. in your tribe, *and guided* (Ad-Duha:8): that is, guided them to knowing you. *And we found you in need, and made you rich* (ibid:8) i.e. we made you rich by causing your supplications to be answered.

Al-Ma'mÿn said: May Allah bless you O son of the prophet! What is the meaning of the verse:

> *When Moses came to our station, and his Lord spoke to him, he said: May I see thee? The Lord said: You shall never see me ?"* (Al-Araf: 142).

How can it be that the one to whom Allah spoke, Moses b Amram, did not know that Allah, may His name be glorified, cannot be seen, and ask this question?"

Al-Riðå said: " Moses, the one to whom Allah spoke, knew full well that Allah is above being perceived by the eyes. When however, Allah spoke to him, and brought him closer in confidence, he went down to his people and informed them: *Allah has spoken to me and made me one of those who are close to Him. (Al Shuara'a:* 21.). They said: We will not believe you until we

hear Allah in the same way you heard Him." The number of the tribe at that time was 700000. Moses selected from them 70000 people, and then from this 7000, and then from this 700, and finally from this 700 selected 70--to go with him to the meeting place with his Lord. They came to the foot of the mountain, and Moses ascended to Sinai. He asked Allah to speak to him and let them hear the same words. Allah spoke to him, and they heard--from above and below, left and right, front and behind, for Allah caused the voice to be in a tree, and then made it resound so that they heard it from every direction. Yet they said: 'We will not believer you that this is the speech of Allah until we see Him clearly. And when they said these grave, insolent, and arrogant words, All unleashed a lightening bolt which struck them all dead in recompense of their obstinacy.

Moses then said: "What will I say to the tribes of Israel when I go back to them? They will say: "You went with them and then killed them because you were not truthful about Allah personally speaking to you."

All thereupon restored them to life and sent them with him. They said: If you were to ask Allah to see Him, He would oblige you. You told us about how Allah was, and now we would have the true knowledge."

Moses said: "O People! All cannot be seen by the naked eyes and he is above the qualities that allow for this. Instead, Allah is known by his miracles, and by His signs."

The people replied: "We will not believe in you until you ask Him."

Moses said:My Lord! You have heard the words of the Israelites and you know best about them. Allah then revealed: "Ask me what they have asked you. And I will not take you to task for their ignorance. Whereupon Moses said: "Lord! cause me to look upon thee!"

Allah said: "*Thou shalt never see me, but rather look at that mountain. If it stays in its plaee--and it will fall--then you will see me.* And when Allah manifested Himself upon the Mountain, in a manner of a sign from his Signs, it disentigrated, and Moses was struck unconscious. When he recovered, he said: "Glory be to All1 It has been proven! I have understood you now in spite of the ignorance of my people.: " *And I am among the first of the believers*" , among them, in that you cannot be seen."

Al-Ma'myn said: "All has given you knowledge, O Abu'l Hassan. Tell me about the words of Allah:

> *And with passion did she desire him, and he would have desired her, but he saw the evidence of his Lord.*(Yusuf:24).

Al-Riðå said: "She desired him passionately, and had he not seen the signs of his Lord, he would have desired her the way she wanted him. He was however infallible, and such a person does not lust behind any sinful act or even its approaches even. My father has told me from his father, Al-Sadiq, that the latter said: 'She intended to commit the sin, and Yusuf intended not to.'"

Al-Ma'mun said: "Truly Allah has bestowed knowledge upon you, O Abu'l Hassan! Tell me about the words of Allah, the Glorious and Exalted:

> *And (remember) Dhu'nun when he departed in anger; he thought that We had no power over him . But he cried through the depths of the darkness, 'There is no one worthy of worship but Thee. Glory to thee, I was indeed among the ;ðlimîn. So we responded to him an delivered him from his distress; thus do we deliver those that have faith."* (al-Anbiya: 87)

Al-Riðå answered him: "That was Jonah, son of Amitai. He had gone in anger to his people, and in the verse "*thought*" indicates ascertaining that we would not place any restriction on him i.e.

in terms of what we had given him. Examples of such usage are in: *But when He trieth him, restricting his sustenance. . .* (al-Fajr:16) i.e. that which we bestowed upon him. *He called out in the darkness:* the darkness of night, and the darkness of Fajr, and the darkness of the inside of the whale: "*There is no one worthy of worship but Thee! I was from among those in darkness.*"[11] I.e. while I was in the darkness of the whale's stomach, not able to do the prayer in which I took so much pleasure. And so Allah responded to him. Our Lord has said: *Were he not among those who praise me, he would have remained in there until the day of resurrection.*(al-Saffat:144)

Al-Ma'mӯn said:"God has truly bestowed perception on thee, O Abu'l Hassan. Tell me about the verse:

> *Until the messengers give up hope and think that they are regarded as liars, then there reaches to them our help."* (Yusuf:110)

Al-Riðā said: "All is saying: 'Until such time as the messengers give up hope, and their people think that they are liars, succour came to the prophets."

Al- Ma'mӯn again complimented the Imam on his knowledge and asked the meaning of:

> *So that Allah may forgive thee of the sins that thou hast committed before and will commit after."* (al-Fath:1)

Al-Riðā said: As far as the polytheists of Mecca were concerned, there was none more guilty of sin that the Messenger of Allah, for they used to worship 360 idols, and and when he came with his call to dedication and unicity of Allah, they perceived this as a great sin and said to him: "*Do you seek to make the gods into one? This is indeed a grevious thing. And their leaders went out (saying):*

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[11]The explanation focuses on the different usages of the word "¡ulm" and its derivative forms, which can sometimes indicate wrong doing, and at others, the darkness that is not spiritual, but simply due to the physical absence of light. The point is that a word may be used throughout the Qur'an, but its meaning may differ according to context.

Be constant to your gods! This is a thing designed agaisnt you. We have not heard of this from the latter day religions. This is indeed a concocted tale (Sad:5,6,7).

When Allah caused the prophet to capture the city of Mecca, He said: *'(O Mu'ammad!) I have clearly made the city at your disposal--so that it may forgive you for the sins which you did before and after"* according to the views of the polytheists of Mecca when you called them to the worship of the one God--when you did that previously and what you will continue to do.' This is because some of the Meccans had converted to Islam, others had left. Those who remained could not reject the Oneness of God when Mu'ammad called to it. His apparent sin with them therefore was seen as forgiven when he triumphed over them."

Al-Ma'mun said:"You have told the truth, O son of the prophet! Tell me

about:

> *When thou said to the one who had received the grace of Allah and thy favour. Keep your wife in wedlock with you and fear All! But you hid in your heart that which Allah was about to make manifest; thou wert afraid of the people, but it is more fitting that you should fear All!"* (al-Ahzab: 37)

Al-Riðã responded: "The Messenger of Allah went to the house of Zaid b. al-Haritha b. Sharahil al-Kalbi for something that he needed to do. He saw Zaid's wife having a bath and said to her:"Glory be to the one who has created you." By this, he meant to deny any imputation of those who said concerning Allah:"The angels are the daughters of Allah!" And Allah said: *Has Allah bestowed upon you sons and taken females as angels! You indeed say something grave*!(al-Isra:40).

The Prophet said, when he saw her having her bath: "*Glory be to the one who created you*" that He should take a child needing this sort of purification and bath. When Zaid returned, his wife informed him of the prophet's visit, and his statement of "Glory be to one who hac created you!" Zaid

did not realise what the Prophet meant by that, and assumed that he spoke thus because he was impressed by her beauty. He therefore came to the prophet and said: "O Messenger of Allah! My wife is not a good woman, and I intend to divorce her!"

The prophet thereupon said to him: " *Keep your wife in wedlock with you and fear All!*" Now Allah had already shown the Prophet his wives, and that this woman was amongst them, but he (ص) kept this information to himself and did not reveal it to Zaid. This was because he was afraid that the people would say: "Muʾammad has said to his bondsman that the latter's spouse would become his wife!" They would then disparage him, and so Allah revealed the verse: *When thou said to the one who had received the grace of Allah* i.e. by granting him Islam, *and thy favour* that is, your having emancipated him *Keep your wife in wedlock with you and fear Allah! But you hid in your heart that which Allah was about to make manifest; thou wert afraid of the people, but it is more fitting that you should fear Allah!"* (al-Ahzab: 37).

Zaid later divorced her, and after she had observed her 'idda, Allah wedded her to the Prophet, and revealed a verse in connection with this saying:

> *Then when Zaid had dissolved his marriage with her according to the law,we joined her in marriage to thee, in order that there may be no difficulty to the believers in the matter of marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, if the latter have divorced them according to all the necessary formalities. And All's command must be fulfilled.* (al-Ahzab: 37)

Al-Ma'mўn said: You have put my heart at rest, O son of the prophet! You have elucidated that which was unclear to me. May Allah reward you on behalf of His prophets and Islam."

Ali b. Al-Jahm said: "al-Ma'mўn then went to pray, and took the hand of Jafar b. Muʾammad who was present—and I followed them--and al-Ma'mўn said to him: "What do you think of your nephew?"

Ja'far replied:"A true scholar. We do not find him inferior to anyone of the people of knowledge."

Al-Ma'mun said:"Your nephew is from the household of the prophethood, of those regarding whom the Prophet said: "The innocent ones of my household, the pure ones from my progeny, are the most contemplative in their childhood, the most wise in their adulthood. So seek not to teach them for they are more learned than you, they will never take you outside of guidance,nor ever lead you astray!"

Al-Riđā went to his home, and the next morning I went to him. I told him what al-Ma'mŷn had said and what his uncle, Muʾammad b. Ja'far had replied. He laughed and said: 'O Ibn Jahm! Let not what he has said deceive you. For he will assassinate me, and Allah will exact vengeance for me upon him!'"



إحتجاج الرّضا عليه السلام على أهل الكتاب والمجوس ورئيس الصابئين وغيرهم من أهل الشّقاق

روي عن الحسن بن محمّد النوفلي أنّه قال: لمّا قدم عليّ بن موسى الرّضا صلوات الله عليه على المأمون، أمر الفضل بن سهل أن يجمع له أصحاب المقالات، مثل: الجاثليق، ورأس الجالوت، ورؤساء الصابئين، والهربذ الأكبر، وأصحاب زردشت وقسطاس الرُّومي، والمتكلّمين، ليسمع كلامه وكلامهم، فجمعهم الفضل بن سهل ثمّ أعلم المأمون باجتماعهم فقال: أدخلهم عليَّ ففعل، فرحّب بهم المأمون ثمّ قال لهم:

إنّما جمعتكم لخير، وأحببت أن تناظروا ابن عمّي هذا المدني القادم عليَّ فإذا كان بكرة غد فاغدوا عليَّ ولا يتخلّف منكم أحد.

فقالوا: السّمع والطاعة يا أمير المؤمنين، نحن مبكرون إن شاء الله.

قال الحسن بن محمّد النوفلي: فبينا نحن في حديث لنا عند أبي

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[١] رواه الصّدوق رحمه الله في التّوحيد ص٣٦٣، الباب٥٩، برقم١٢. والعيون ١٤٢/١، الباب١١، برقم٤٥: عن أحمد بن هارون الفامي، عن محمّد بن عبدالله بن جعفر الحميري، عن أبيه، عن إبراهيم بن هاشم، عن علي بن معبد، عن الحسين بن خالد...

وانظر روضة الواعظين ص٤٣.

الحسن الرّضا عليه السلام إذ دخل علينا ياسر الخادم ـ وكان يتولّى أمر أبي الحسن عليه السلام ـ فقال: يا سيدي! إنّ أمير المؤمنين يقرؤك السّلام ويقول: فداك أخوك، إنّه اجتمع إليّ أصحاب المقالات وأهل الأديان والمتكلّمون من جميع أهل الملل، فرأيك في البكور علينا إن أحببت كلامهم، وإن كرهت ذلك فلا تتجشّم، وإن أحببت أن نصير إليك خفّ ذلك علينا.

فقال أبو الحسن عليه السلام: أبلغه السّلام وقل له: قد علمت ما أردت، وأنا صائر إليك بكرة إن شاء الله.

قال الحسن بن محمّد النوفلي: فلمّا مضى ياسر التفت إلينا ثمّ قال لي: يا نوفلي! أنت عراقي ورقة العراقي غير غليظة، فما عندك في جمع ابن عمّي علينا أهل الشرك وأصحاب المقالات؟

فقلت: جعلت فداك! يريد الامتحان، ويحب أن يعرف ما عندك، ولقد بنى على أساس غير وثيق البنيان، وبئس والله ما بنى.

فقال لي: وما بناؤه في هذا الباب؟

قلت: إنّ أصحاب الكلام والبدع خلاف العلماء، وذلك أنّ العالم لا ينكر غير المنكر، وأصحاب المقالات والمتكلّمون وأهل الشّرك أصحاب إنكار ومباهتة، إن احتججت عليهم بأنّ الله واحد قالوا: صحّح وحدانيّته، وإن قلت: إنّ محمّداً صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم رسول الله، قالوا: أثبت رسالته، ثمّ يباهتون الرجل ـ وهو يبطل عليهم[1] بحجّته ـ ويغالطونه حتّى

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[1] في «ح» ، «د» ، «ط»: مبطل عليهم...

يترك قوله، فاحذرهم جعلت فداك!

قال: فتبسّم عليه السلام ثمّ قال: يا نوفلي! أتخاف أن يقطعوا عليَّ حجّتي؟!

قلت: لا والله ما خفت عليك قطّ، وإنّي لأرجو أن يظفرك الله بهم إن شاء الله تعالى.

فقال لي: يا نوفلي! أتحب أن تعلم متى يندم المأمون؟ قلت: نعم.

قال: إذا سمع احتجاجي على أهل التوراة بتوراتهم، وعلى أهل الإنجيل بإنجيلهم، وعلى أهل الزبور بزبورهم، وعلى الصابئين بعبرانيتهم، وعلى الهرابذة بفارسيتهم، وعلى أهل الرّوم بروميتهم، وعلى أهل المقالات بلغاتهم، فإذا قطعت كل صنف ودحضت حجّته وترك مقالته ورجع إلى قولي، علم المأمون أنّ الموضع الذي هو بسبيله ليس بمستحق له، فعند ذلك تكون الندامة منه، ولا حول ولا قوة إلّا بالله العليّ العظيم.

فلمّا أصبحنا أتانا الفضل بن سهل فقال له: جعلت فداك! انّ ابن عمّك ينتظرك، وقد اجتمع القوم فما رأيك في إتيانه؟

فقال له الرّضا عليه السلام: تقدّمني فاني سائر إلى ناحيتكم إن شاء الله، ثمّ توضأ عليه السلام وضوء الصّلاة، وشرب شربة سويق وسقانا، ثمّ خرج وخرجنا معه حتّى دخلنا على المأمون، وإذا المجلس غاص بأهله، ومحمّد ابن جعفر في جماعة الطالبيين والهاشميين والقواد حضور.

بني هاشم فما زالوا وقوفاً ـ والرّضا عليه السّلام جالس مع المأمون ـ حتّى أمرهم بالجلوس فجلسوا فلم يزل المأمون مقبلًا عليه يحدّثه ساعة، ثمّ التفت إلى الجاثليق فقال:

يا جاثليق! هذا ابن عمّي عليّ بن موسى بن جعفر وهو من ولد فاطمة بنت نبينا محمّد صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم، وابن عليّ بن أبي طالب عليه السّلام فأُحب أن تكلّمه وتحاجه وتنصفه.

فقال الجاثليق: يا أمير المؤمنين! كيف أُحاج رجلًا يحتجّ عليّ بكتاب أنا منكره، ونبيّ لا أؤمن به؟

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام: يا نصراني! فان احتججت عليك بإنجيلك أتقرّ به؟

قال الجاثليق: وهل أقدر على دفع ما نطق به الإنجيل، نعم والله أُقرّ به على رغم أنفي.

فقال له الرّضا عليه السّلام: سل عمّا بدا لك واسمع الجواب.

قال الجاثليق: ما تقول في نبوة عيسى وكتابه، هل تنكر منهما شيئاً؟

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: أنا مقرّ بنبوّة عيسى وكتابه، وما بشّر به أُمّته، وأقرّت به الحواريون، وكافر بنبوّة كل عيسى لم يقرّ بنبوّة محمّد صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم وكتابه، ولم يبشّر به أُمّته!

قال الجاثليق: أليس إنّما تقطع الأحكام بشاهدَي عدل؟ قال: بلى.

قال: فأقم شاهدين من غير أهل ملّتك على نبوة محمّد ممّن لا تنكره

النصرانية وسلنا مثل ذلك من غير أهل ملّتنا.

قال الرّضا عليه السلام: الآن جئت بالنصفة يا نصراني! ألا تقبل مني العدل المقدم عند المسيح عيسى بن مريم عليهما السلام؟ قال الجاثليق: ومن هذا العدل سمّه لي؟

قال: ما تقول في (يوحنّا) الديلمي؟ قال: بخ بخ! ذكرت أحب النّاس إلى المسيح.

قال: فأقسمت عليك هل نطق الإنجيل أنّ يوحنّا قال: إنَّ المسيح أخبرني بدين محمّد العربي وبشّرني به أنّه يكون من بعدي، فبشّرت به الحواريين فآمنوا به؟

قال الجاثليق: قد ذكر ذلك يوحنّا عن المسيح، وبشر بنبوة رجل وبأهل بيته ووصيه وأهل بيته، ولم يلخّص متى يكون ذلك، ولم يسمّ لنا القوم فنعرفهم.

قال الرّضا عليه السلام: فان جئناك بمن يقرأ الإنجيل فتلا عليك ذكر محمّد صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وأهل بيته وأُمّته أتؤمن به؟ قال: سديداً[1].

قال الرّضا لقسطاس الرُّومي: كيف حفظك للسفر الثالث من الإنجيل؟

قال: ما أحفظني له، ثمّ التفت إلى رأس الجالوت فقال عليه السلام: ألست تقرأ الإنجيل؟ قال: بلى لعمري.

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[1] كذا في «أ» والتوحيد والعيون، ولكن في «ب» و« ج» و«د» و«ط»: أمر سديد.

قال: فخذ عليَّ السفر الثالث، فان كان فيه ذكر محمّد وأهل بيته وأُمّته فاشهدوا لي، وإن لم يكن فيه ذكره فلا تشهدوا لي!

ثمّ قرأ عليه‌السلام السفر الثالث حتّى بلغ ذكر النّبي صلى‌الله‌عليه‌وآله‌وسلم، وقف ثمّ قال: يا نصراني! إنّي أسألك بحقّ المسيح وأمّه، أتعلم أنّي عالم بالإنجيل؟

قال: نعم، ثمّ تلا علينا ذكر محمّد وأهل بيته وأُمّته، ثمّ قال: ما تقول يا نصراني؟ هذا قول عيسى بن مريم، فان كذبت ما ينطق به الإنجيل فقد كذبت موسى وعيسى عليهما‌السلام، ومتى أنكرت هذا الذكر وجب عليك القتل، لأنّك تكون قد كفرت بربّك ونبيك وبكتابك.

قال الجاثليق: لا أنكر ما قد بان لي من الإنجيل، وإنّي لمقرّ به.

قال الرّضا عليه‌السلام: اشهدوا على إقراره.

ثمّ قال: يا جاثليق! سل عمّا بدا لك، قال الجاثليق: أخبرني عن حواريّ عيسى بن مريم عليهما‌السلام كم كان عدّتهم؟ وعن علماء الإنجيل كم كانوا؟

قال الرّضا عليه‌السلام: على الخبير سقطت، أمّا الحواريون فكانوا اثني عشر رجلًا، وكان أفضلهم وأعلمهم (لوقا)[1] وأمّا علماء النّصارى فكانوا ثلاثة رجال (يوحنّا) الأكبر ـ باحي[2] ـ و(يوحنا) بقرقيسيا و(يوحنّا)

[1] في «أ» و«ب» و«ج»: ألوقا.

[2] في التوحيد والعيون: يوحنّا الأكبر بأج. وفي «ط»: يا حي.

الديلمي بزجار[1] وعنده كان ذكر النّبي صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم، وذكر أهل بيته وهو الذي بشّر أمّة عيسى وبني إسرائيل به.

ثمّ قال: يا نصرانيّ! والله إنّا لنؤمن بعيسى الذي آمن بمحمّد صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم. وما ننقم على عيساكم شيئاً إلّا ضعفه وقلّة صيامه وصلاته.

قال الجاثليق: أفسدت والله علمك وضعفت أمرك وما كنت ظننت إلّا أنّك أعلم أهل الإسلام.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: وكيف ذلك؟! قال الجاثليق: من قولك إنّ عيسى كان ضعيفاً قليل الصيام والصّلاة، وما أفطر عيسى يوماً قطّ، ولا نام بليل قطّ، وما زال صائم الدّهر قائم اللّيل.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: فلمن كان يصوم ويصلي؟ فخرس الجاثليق وانقطع.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: يا نصراني! إنّي أسألك عن مسألة. قال: سل! فان كان عندي علمها أجبتك.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: ما أنكرت أنّ عيسى كان يحيي الموتى بإذن الله عزّ وجلّ.

قال الجاثليق: أنكرت ذلك من قبل، إنّ من أحيى الموتى وأبرأ الأكمه والأبرص، فهو (ربّ) مستحق لأن يعبد.

قال الرّضا صلوات الله عليه: فان اليسع قد صنع مثل ما صنع عيسى عليه

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[1] في «أ»: بزحار. وفي «ط»: بزخار.

السّلام: مشى على الماء وأحيى الموتى وأبرأ الأكمه والأبرص، فلَمْ تتّخذه أمّته ربّاً ولم يعبده أحد من دون الله عزّ وجلّ؟ ولقد صنع حزقيل النّبي مثل ما صنع عيسى بن مريم، فأحيى خمسة وثلاثين ألف رجل من بعد موتهم بستين سنة، ثمّ التفت إلى رأس الجالوت فقال له: يا رأس الجالوت! أتجد هؤلاء في شباب بني إسرائيل في التوارة، اختارهم (بخت نصر) من سبي بني إسرائيل حين غزا بيت المقدس، ثمّ انصرف بهم إلى بابل، فأرسله الله عزّ وجلّ إليهم فأحياهم، هذا في التوراة لا يدفعه إلّا كافر منكم.

قال رأس الجالوت: قد سمعنا به وعرفناه. قال: صدقت.

ثمّ قال: يا يهودي! خذ على هذا السفر من التوراة، فتلا عليه من التوراة آيات، فأقبل اليهودي يترجح لقراءته، ويتعجب ثمّ أقبل على النصراني فقال: يا نصراني! أفهؤلاء كانوا قبل عيسى أم عيسى كان قبلهم؟

قال: بل كانوا قبله.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: لقد اجتمعت قريش إلى رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم فسألوه أن يحيي لهم موتاهم، فوجّه معهم عليّ بن أبي طالب عليه السّلام فقال له: «اذهب إلى الجبانة[1]، فناد بأسماء هؤلاء الرهط الذين يسألون عنهم بأعلى صوتك، يا فلان، ويا فلان، ويا فلان، يقول لكم محمّد رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم قوموا بإذن الله عزّ وجلّ».

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(1) الجبّان والجبّانة، مشددتين: المقبرة والصحراء والمنبت الكريم القاموس ٢٠٨/٤.

فناداهم فقاموا ينفضون التراب عن رؤوسهم فأقبلت قريش تسألهم عن أمورهم، ثمّ أخبروهم أنّ محمّداً قد بعث نبياً فقالوا: وددنا أن أدركناه فنؤمن به، ولقد أبرأ الأكمه والأبرص والمجانين، ولقد كلمته البهائم والطير والجن والشّياطين، ولم نتخذه رباً من دون اللّه، ولم ننكر لأحد من هؤلاء فضلهم، فان اتّخذتم عيسى رباً جاز لكم أن تتخذوا اليسع وحزقيل ربّين، لأنّهما قد صنعا مثل ما صنع عيسى بن مريم من إحياء الموتى وغيره.

ثمّ أنّ قوماً من بني إسرائيل خرجوا من بلادهم من الطاعون وهم أُلوف حذر الموت فأماتهم اللّه في ساعة واحدة، فعمد أهل تلك القرية فحظّروا عليهم حظيرة، فلم يزالوا فيها حتّى نخرت عظامهم وصاروا رميماً، فمر بهم نبي من أنبياء بني إسرائيل فتعجب منهم ومن كثرة العظام البالية، فأوحى اللّه عزّ وجلّ إليه أتحب أن احييهم لك فتنذرهم؟

قال: نعم يا ربّ.

فأوحى اللّه إليه أن نادهم فقال: أيتها العظام البالية قومي بإذن اللّه عزّ وجل! فقاموا أحياء أجمعون ينفضون التراب عن رؤوسهم، ثمّ إبراهيم خليل الرّحمان عليه السّلام حين اتّخذ الطير فقطعهنّ قطعاً، ثمّ وضع على كل جبل منهنّ جزءً، ثمّ ناداهنّ فأقبلن سعياً إليه، ثمّ موسى بن عمران وأصحابه السبعون الذين اختارهم صاروا معه إلى الجبل فقالوا له: إنّك قد رأيت اللّه فأرناه كما رأيته.

فقال لهم: إنّي لم أره.

فقالوا: لن نؤمن لك حتّى نرى اللّه جهرة، فأخذتهم الصاعقة [بظلمهم][١] فاحترقوا عن آخرهم وبقي موسى وحيداً.

فقال: يا رب! اخترت سبعين رجلاً من بني إسرائيل فجئت بهم، فأرجع وحدي[٢]، فكيف يصدقني قومي بما أخبرهم به، فلو شئت أهلكتهم من قبل وإيّاي أفتهلكنا بما فعل السفهاء منّا؟

فأحياهم اللّه عزّ وجلّ من بعد موتهم، وكل شيء ذكرته لك من هذا لا تقدر على دفعه، لأنّ التوراة والإنجيل والزبور والفرقان قد نطقت به، فإن كان كل من أحيى الموتى وأبرأ الأكمه والأبرص والمجانين يتخذ ربّاً من دون اللّه تعالى فاتّخذ هؤلاء كلّهم أرباباً! ما تقول يا نصراني؟!

فقال الجاثليق: القول قولك، ولا إله إلّا اللّه.

ثمّ التفت إلى رأس الجالوت فقال: يا يهودي! أقبل عليّ أسألك بالعشر الآيات التي أنزلت على موسى بن عمران عليه السلام[٣] هل تجد في التوارة مكتوباً نبأ محمّد صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم وأمّته إذا جاءت الأمّة الأخيرة أتباع راكب البعير، يسبّحون الرّب جداً جداً، تسبيحاً جديداً في الكنايس الجدد، فليفزع بنو إسرائيل إليهم وإلى ملكهم لتطمئن قلوبهم فان بأيديهم سيوفاً ينتقمون بها من الأمم الكافرة في أقطار الأرض، هكذا هو في

[١] ما بين المعقوفتين موجود في «أ» و«ب» و«ج» و«د».

[٢] في «ط»: أنا وحدي.

[٣]وهي: يد موسى. وعصاه. ولسانه. والبحر. والطوفان. والجراد. والقمل. والضفادع. والدم. وتحريم الصيد.

التوارة مكتوب؟

قال رأس الجالوت: نعم. إنّا لنجد ذلك كذلك.

ثمّ قال للجاثليق: يا نصراني! كيف علمك بكتاب شعيا؟ قال: أعرفه حرفاً حرفاً.

قال لهما: أتعرفان هذا من كلامه؟ يا قوم إنّي رأيت صورة راكب الحمار لابساً جلابيب النور، ورأيت راكب البعير ضوؤه مثل ضوء القمر؟ فقالا: قد قال ذلك شعيا.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: يا نصراني! أهل تعرف في الإنجيل قول عيسى: إني ذاهب إلى ربكم وربي، و(البارقليطا)[1] جائي هو الذي يشهد لي بالحقّ كما شهدت له، وهو الذي يفسّر لكم كل شيء، وهو الذي يبدي فضايح الأُمم، وهو الذي يكسر عمود الكفر؟

فقال الجاثليق: ما ذكرت شيئاً من الإنجيل إلّا ونحن مقرّون به.

فقال عليه السّلام: أتجد هذا في الإنجيل ثابتاً؟ قال: نعم.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: يا جاثليق! ألا تخبرني عن الإنجيل الأول حين افتقدتموه، عند من وجدتموه؟ ومن وضع لكم هذا الإنجيل؟

قال له: ما افتقدنا الإنجيل إلّا يوماً واحداً حتّى وجدناه غضّاً طرياً فأخرجه إلينا يوحنّا ومتّى.

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام: ما أقل معرفتك بسنن الإنجيل وعلمائه، فان

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(١) في التوحيد: الفارقليطا.

كان كما تزعم فلم اختلفتم في الإنجيل؟ وإنّما وقع الاختلاف في هذا الإنجيل الذي في أيديكم اليوم، فلو كان على العهد الأول لم تختلفوا فيه، ولكنّي مفيدك علم ذلك، إعلم انّه لمّا افتقد الإنجيل الأول اجتمعت النّصارى إلى علمائهم فقالوا لهم: قتل عيسى بن مريم وافتقدنا الإنجيل، وأنتم العلماء فما عندكم؟

فقال لهم الوقا ومرقانوس ويوحنّا ومتّى: إنّ الإنجيل في صدورنا ونحن العلماء نخرجه إليكم سفراً سفراً، في كل أحد، فلا تحزنوا عليه ولا تخلوا الكنايس، فانا سنتلوه عليكم في كل أحد سفراً سفراً حتّى نجمعه كلّه.

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام: إنّ الوقا ومرقانوس ويوحنّا ومتّى وضعوا لكم هذا الإنجيل بعد ما افتقدتم الإنجيل الأول، وإنّما كان هؤلاء الأربعة تلاميذ تلاميذ الأولين، أعلِمتَ ذلك؟

قال الجاثليق: أمّا قبل هذا فلم أعلمه وقد علمته الآن، وقد بان لي من فضل علمك بالإنجيل وسمعت[1] أشياء ممّا علمته شهد قلبي أنّها حقّ، واستزدت كثيراً من الفهم.

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام: فكيف شهادة هؤلاء عندك؟

قال: جائزة، هؤلاء علماء الانجيل، وكلّ ما شهدوا به فهو حقّ.

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام ـ للمأمون ومن حضره من أهل بيته ومن غيرهم

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(١) في «لا ح» و«د» و«ط»: وقد سمعت...

ـ: اشهدوا عليه!

قالوا: قد شهدنا.

ثمّ قال للجاثليق: بحقّ الابن وأُمّه، هل تعلم أنّ (متّى) قال في نسبة عيسى: إنّ المسيح بن داود بن إبراهيم بن إسحاق بن يعقوب بن يهود بن خضرون؟[1] وقال (مرقانوس) في نسبة عيسى بن مريم عليهما السّلام: إنّه كلمة اللّٰه أحلها في جسد الآدمي فصارت إنساناً؟ وقال (الوقا): إنّ عيسى بن مريم وأُمّه كانا إنسانين من لحم ودم فدخل فيهما روح القدس؟ ثمّ إنّك تقول من شهادة عيسى على نفسه حقّاً أقول لكم إنّه لا يصعد إلى السّماء إلّا من نزل منها إلّا راكب البعير خاتم الأنبياء، فانّه يصعد إلى السّماء وينزل فما تقول في هذا القول؟

قال الجاثليق: هذا قول عيسى لا ننكره.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: فما تقول في شهادة الوقا ومرقانوس ومتّى على عيسى وما نسبوه إليه؟ قال الجاثليق: كذبوا على عيسى.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: يا قوم! أليس قد زكاهم وشهد أنّهم علماء الإنجيل وقولهم حقّ؟ فقال الجاثليق: يا عالم المسلمين! أحب أن تعفيني من أمر هؤلاء.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: فإنّا قد فعلنا. سل يا نصراني عمّا بدا لك؟

فقال الجاثليق: ليسألك غيري، فواللّٰه ما ظننت أنّ في علماء

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[١] في «ب» و«ج» و«د» والتوحيد: حضرون.

المسلمين مثلك.

فالتفت الرّضا عليه السّلام إلى رأس الجالوت فقال له: تسألني أو أسألك؟

فقال: بل أسألك ولست أقبل منك حجّة إلّا من التوراة، أو من الإنجيل أو من زبور داود، أو ما في صحف إبراهيم وموسى.

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام: لا تقبل مني حجّة إلّا بما تنطق به التوراة على لسان موسى بن عِمران عليه السّلام، والإنجيل على لسان عيسى بن مريم عليهما السّلام، والزبور على لسان داود عليه السّلام.

فقال رأس الجالوت: من أين تثبت نبوّة محمّد ـ صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم ـ؟.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: شهد بنبوته موسى بن عِمران، وعيسى بن مريم، وداود خليفة الله في الأرض عليهم السّلام.

فقال له: أثبت قول موسى بن عِمران!

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: تعلم يا يهودي أنّ موسى أوصى بني إسرائيل فقال له: إنّه سيأتيكم نبي من إخوانكم فيه فصدقوا، ومنه فاسمعوا، فهل تعلم أنّ لبني إسرائيل إخوة غير ولد إسماعيل إن كنت تعرف قرابة إسرائيل من إسماعيل والنسب الذي [1] بينهما من قبل إبراهيم عليه السّلام؟

فقال رأس الجالوت: هذا قول موسى لا ندفعه.

فقال له الرّضا عليه السّلام: هل جاءكم من إخوة بني إسرائيل نبيّ غير

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[1] في «ب» والعيون: والسبب الذي...

محمّد صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم؟ قال: لا.

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام: أفليس قد صحّ هذا عندكم؟

قال: نعم، ولكنّي احب أن تصححه لي من التوراة.

فقال له الرّضا عليه السّلام: هل تنكر أنّ التوراة تقول لكم: جاء النور من قبل طور سيناء، وأضاء للنّاس من جبل ساعير، واستعلن علينا من جبل فاران؟ قال رأس الجالوت: أعرف هذه الكلمات وما أعرف تفسيرها.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: أنا أخبرك به، أمّا قوله: «جاء النور من قبل طور سيناء»: فذلك وحي الله تبارك وتعالى الذي أنزله على موسى على جبل طور سيناء، وأمّا قوله: «وأضاء النّاس في جبل ساعير» فهو: الجبل الذي أوحى الله عزّ وجلّ إلى عيسى بن مريم عليهما السّلام وهو عليه، وأمّا قوله: «واستعلن علينا من جبل فاران»: فذاك جبل من جبال مكّة، وبينه وبينها يومان أو يوم.

قال شعيا النبي ـ فيما تقول أنت وأصحابك في التوراة ـ رأيت راكبين أضاء لهما الأرض، أحدهما على حمار، والآخر على جمل، فمن راكب الحمار ومن راكب الجمل؟ قال رأس الجالوت: لا أعرفهما فخبرني بهما؟

قال عليه السّلام: أما راكب الحمار فعيسى، وأمّا راكب الجمل فمحمّد صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم، أتنكر هذا من التوراة؟ قال: لا، ما أنكره.

ثمّ قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: هل تعرف حيقوق النّبي عليه السّلام؟ قال: نعم انّي به لعارف!

قال: فانه قال ـ وكتابكم ينطق به ـ: جاء الله تعالى بالبيان من جبل فاران، وامتلأت السّماوات من تسبيح أحمد وأمّته، يحمل خيله في البحر كما يحمل في البر، يأتينا بكتاب جديد بعد خراب بيت المقدس، ـ يعني بالكتاب: القرآن ـ أتعرف هذا وتؤمن به؟

قال رأس الجالوت: قد قال ذلك حيقوق النّبي عليه السّلام ولا ننكر قوله.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: فقد قال داود عليه السّلام في زبوره ـ وأنت تقرأه ـ: اللّهم ابعث مقيم السنة بعد الفترة، فهل تعرف نبياً أقام السّنة بعد الفترة غير محمّد صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم؟

قال رأس الجالوت: هذا قول داود نعرفه ولا ننكره، ولكن عنى بذلك: عيسى عليه السّلام، وأيّامه هي الفترة.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: جهلت إنّ عيسى لم يخالف السنة، وكان موافقاً لسنة التوراة حتّى رفعه الله إليه، وفي الإنجيل مكتوب: إنّ ابن البرة ذاهب و(الفارقليطا) جائي من بعده وهو يخفّف الآصار، ويفسّر لكم كل شيء، ويشهد لي كما شهدت له، أنا جئتكم بالأمثال وهو يأتيكم بالتأويل، أتؤمن بهذا في الإنجيل؟ قال: نعم، لا أنكره».

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام: أسألك عن نبيك موسى بن عِمران عليه السّلام.

فقال: سل!

قال: ما الحجّة على أنّ موسى ثبتت نبوّته؟ قال اليهودي: إنّه جاء بما لم يجيء أحد من الأنبياء قبله.

قال له عليه السّلام: مثل ماذا؟

قال: مثل فلق البحر، وقلبه العصا حيّة تسعى، وضربه الحجر فانفجرت منه العيون، وإخراجه يده بيضاء للناظرين، وعلامات لا يقدر الخلق على مثلها.

قال له الرّضا عليه السلام: صدقت في أنّها كانت حجته على نبوته أنّه جاء بما لا يقدر الخلق على مثله، أفليس كل من ادّعى أنّه نبي، ثمّ جاء بما لا يقدر الخلق على مثله وجب عليكم تصديقه؟

قال: لا. لأنّ موسى لم يكن له نظير لمكانه من ربه وقربه منه، ولا يجب علينا الإقرار بنبوّة من ادّعاها، حتّى يأتي من الأعلام بمثل ما جاء.

قال الرّضا عليه السلام: فكيف أقررتم بالأنبياء الذين كانوا قبل موسى عليه السلام، ولم يفلقوا البحر ولم يفجروا من الحجر اثنتي عشرة عيناً، ولم يخرجوا أيديهم مثل إخراج موسى يده بيضاء، ولم يقلبوا العصا حيّة تسعى؟!

قال له اليهودي: قد خبرتك أنّه متى جاءوا على نبوتهم من الآيات بما لا يقدر الخلق على مثله، ولو جاءوا بمثل ما لم يجيء به موسى، أو كانوا على ما جاء به موسى وجب تصديقهم.

قال الرّضا عليه السلام: يا رأس الجالوت! فما يمنعك من الإقرار بعيسى ابن مريم وكان يحيي الموتى، ويبرىء الأكمه والأبرص، ويخلق من الطين كهيئة الطير ثمّ ينفخ فيه فيكون طيراً بإذن الله تعالى؟!

قال رأس الجالوت: يُقال: إنّه فعل ذلك ولم نشهده.

وشاهدته، أليس إنّما جاءت الأخبار من ثقاة أصحاب موسى أنّه فعل ذلك؟

قال: بلى.

قال: فكذلك أيضاً أتتكم الأخبار المتواترة بما فعل عيسى بن مريم، فكيف صدّقتم بموسى ولم تصدّقوا بعيسى؟! فلم يحر جواباً.

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام: وكذلك أمر محمّد صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم وما جاء به، وأمر كل نبي بعثه الله، ومن آياته أنّه كان يتيماً فقيراً راعياً أجيراً لم يتعلم كتاباً، ولم يختلف إلى معلم ثمّ جاء بالقرآن الذي فيه قصص الأنبياء عليهم السّلام وأخبارهم حرفاً حرفاً، وأخبار من مضى ومن بقي إلى يوم القيامة، ثمّ كان يخبرهم بأسرارهم وما يعملون في بيوتهم، وجاء بآيات كثيرة لا تحصى.

قال رأس الجالوت: لم يصح عندنا خبر عيسى، ولا خبر محمّد، ولا يجوز لنا أن نقرّ لهما بما لا يصح عندنا.

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: فالشّاهد الذي يشهد لعيسى عليه السّلام ومحمّد صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم شاهد زور؟ فلم يحر جواباً.

ثمّ دعا بالهربذ الأكبر، فقال له الرّضا عليه السّلام: أخبرني عن زردشت الذي تزعم أنّه نبي، ما حجّتك على نبوته؟

قال: إنّه أتى بما لم يأتنا به أحد قبله، ولم نشهده، ولكنّ الأخبار من أسلافنا وردت علينا بأنّه أحل لنا ما لم يحله غيره فاتبعناه.

قال: أفليس إنّما أتتكم الأخبار فاتبعتموه؟ قال: بلى.

قال: فكذلك سائر الأمم السالفة، أتتهم الأخبار بما أتى به النبيون،

وأتى به موسى وعيسى ومحمّد صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وعليهم السّلام، فما عذركم في ترك الإقرار بهم، إذ كنتم إنّما أقررتم بزردشت من قبل الأخبار المتواترة بأنّه جاء بما لم يجيء به غيره؟ فانقطع الهربذ مكانه.

فقال الرّضا عليه السّلام: يا قوم! إن كان فيكم أحد يخالف الإسلام وأراد أن يسأل فليسأل غير محتشم![1]

فقام إليه عمران الصابي ـ وكان واحداً من المتكلمين ـ فقال: يا عالم النّاس! لولا أنّك دعوت إلى مسألتك لم أقدم عليك بالمسائل، ولقد دخلت الكوفة والبصرة والشّام والجزيرة، ولقيت المتكلمين فلم أقع على أحد يثبت لي واحداً ليس غيره قائماً بوحدانيته، أفتأذن لي أن أسألك؟

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: إن كان في الجماعة عمران الصابي فأنت هو!

قال: أنا هو.

قال: سل يا عمران وعليك بالنصفة، وإيّاك والخطل[2] والجور!

فقال: والله يا سيدي ما أريد إلّا أن تثبت لي شيئاً أتعلق به، فلا أجوزه!

قال: سل عمّا بدا لك! فازدحم النّاس وانضمّ بعضهم إلى بعض.

فقال: أخبرني عن الكائن الأول وعمّا خلق؟

قال: سألت فافهم الجواب!

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[١] الحشمة: الحياء والإنقباض ـ لسان العرب ١٢/١٣٥.

[٢] الخَطَلُ: خفّة وسرعة... والمنطق الفاسد ـ لسان العرب ١١/٢٠٩.

أمّا الواحد: فلم يزل كائناً واحداً، لا شيء معه، بلا حدود، ولا أعراض ولا يزال كذلك، ثمّ خلق خلقاً مبتدعاً مختلفاً، بأعراض وحدود مختلفة، لا في شيء أقامه، ولا في شيء حدّه، ولا على شيء حذاه ومثله، فجعل الخلق من بعد ذلك صفوة وغير صفوة [١]، واختلافاً وايتلافاً، وألواناً وذوقاً وطعماً [٢]، لا لحاجة كانت منه إلى ذلك، ولا لفضل منزلة لم يبلغها إلّا به، ولا رأى لنفسه فيما خلق زيادة ولا نقصاناً، تعقل هذا يا عمران؟ قال: نعم والله يا سيدي.

قال: واعلم يا عمران! أنّه لو كان خلق ما خلق لحاجة، لم يخلق إلّا من يستعين به على حاجته، ولكان ينبغي أن يخلق أضعاف ما خلق، لأنّ الأعوان كلّما كثروا كان صاحبهم أقوى.

ـ ثمّ طال السؤال والجواب بين الرّضا عليه السّلام وبين عمران الصابي، وألزمه عليه السّلام في أكثر مسائله حتّى انتهت الحال إلى أن قال ـ: يا سيدي! أشهد أنّه كما وصفت ولكن بقيت مسألة!

قال: سل عمّا أردت!

قال: أسألك عن (الحكيم) في أي شيء هو؟ وهل يحيط به شيء؟ وهل يتحول من شيء إلى شيء؟ أو به حاجة إلى شيء؟

قال الرّضا عليه السّلام: اخبرك يا عمران فاعقل ما سألت عنه، فانه من

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[١] في «ط»: وغير صفوة لله...

[٢] في «أ» و«ب» و«جـ» و«د»: ورائحة...

أغمض ما يرد على المخلوقين في مسائلهم، وليس يفهمه المتفاوت عقله[١] العازب حلمه، ولا يعجز عن فهمه أولوا العقل المنصفون.

أمّا أول ذلك: فلو كان خلق ما خلق لحاجة منه، لجاز لقائل أن يقول: يتحوّل إلى ما خلق لحاجته إلى ذلك، ولكنّه عزّ وجلّ لم يخلق شيئاً لحاجة، ولم يزل ثابتاً لا في شيء [ولا على شيء][٢]، إلّا أنّ الخلق يمسك بعضه بعضاً ويدخل بعضه في بعض ويخرج منه. والله جلّ وتقدّس بقدرته يمسك ذلك كلّه، وليس يدخل في شيء ولا يخرج منه ولا يؤوده حفظه، ولا يعجز عن إمساكه، ولا يعرف أحد من الخلق كيف ذلك إلّا الله عزّ وجلّ ومن أطلعه من رسله وأهل سرّه والمستحفظين لأمره وخزّانه القائمين بشريعته، وإنّما أمره كلمح البصر أو هو أقرب، إذا شاء شيئاً فانّما يقول له: كن فيكون بمشيئته وإرادته، وليس شيء من خلقه أقرب إليه من شيء، ولا شيء أبعد منه من شيء، أفهمت يا عمران؟

قال: نعم يا سيدي قد فهمت، وأشهد أنّ الله على ما وصفت ووحدت، وأنّ محمّداً عبده المبعوث بالهدى ودين الحق، ثمّ خرّ ساجداً نحو القبلة وأسلم.

قال الحسن بن محمّد النوفلي: فلمّا نظر المتكلمون إلى كلام عمران الصابي ـ وكان جدلاً لم يقطعه عن حجّته أحد قطّ ـ لم يدن من

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[١] في «أ» و«ب» و«ط»: المتقارب عقله.

[٢] ما بين المعقوفتين موجود في «أ» والتوحيد.

الرّضا عليه السّلام أحد منهم ولم يسألوه عن شيء، وأمسينا فنهض المأمون والرّضا عليه السّلام فدخلا وانصرف النّاس.

ثمّ قال الرّضا عليه السّلام ـ بعد أن عاد إلى منزله ـ: يا غلام! صر إلى عمران الصابي فأتني به.

فقلت: جعلت فداك! أنا أعرف موضعه وهو عند بعض إخواننا من الشّيعة. قال: فلا بأس قربوا إليه دابة. فصرت إلى عمران فأتيته به، فرحّب به، ودعا بكسوة فخلعها عليه [1]، ودعا بعشرة آلاف درهم فوصله بها.

فقلت: جعلت فداك! حكيت فعل جدّك أمير المؤمنين عليه السّلام.

قال: هكذا يجب. ثمّ دعا عليه السّلام بالعشاء [2] فأجلسني عن يمينه، وأجلس عمران عن يساره، حتّى إذا فرغنا قال لعمران: إنصرف مصاحباً وبكّر علينا نطعمك من طعام المدينة.

فكان عمران بعد ذلك يجتمع إليه المتكلمون من أصحاب المقالات فيبطل عليهم أمرهم حتّى اجتنبوه، ووصله المأمون بعشرة آلاف درهم، وأعطاه الفضل مالاً جزيلاً، وولّاه الرّضا عليه السّلام صدقات بلخ فأصاب الرغائب [3][4].

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[١] في «أ» و«ب»: فجعلها عليه.

[٢] العشاء، كسماء: طعام العشيّ ـ القاموس ٣٦٢/٤.

[٣] الرغيبة: الأمر المرغوب فيه، والعطاء الكثير ـ القاموس ٧٤/١.

[٤] رواه الصّدوق رحمه الله في التوحيد ص٤١٧، الباب٦٥، برقم١. والعيون ١٥٤/١، الباب١٢، برقم١: عن أبي محمّد: جعفر بن علي بن أحمد الفقيه القمّي، عن أبي محمّد: الحسن بن

محمّد بن علي بن صدقة القمّي، عن أبي عمرو: محمّد بن عمر بن عبد العزيز الأنصاري الكجي، قال: حدّثني من سمع الحسن بن محمّد النوفلي ثمّ الهاشمي، يقول: لما قدم...

ونقله العلّامة المجلسي رحمه الله في بحار الأنوار ٢٩٩/١٠ـ٣٢٨ مع شرح وتوضيح، ٣٨٦/١٣ و٤٠١ و٣٤٧، ٢٧٩/١٤ و١٦٢ و٣٣١ و٤٢، ٢٧٩/٦٣.

[١] طه ١٢١/٢٠.

[٢] البقرة ٣٥/٢.

[٣] الأعراف ٢٠/٧.